

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 14319

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US

SUBJECT: FAREWELL CALL ON ARBATOV, DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTE FOR
STUDY OF USA AND CANADA

1. SUMMARY: IN BRIEF PRIVATE TALK ARBATOV WAS RELATIVELY
RELAXED ABOUT US-SOVIET RELATIONS: "THEY ARE NOT AS BAD
AS THEY MIGHT BE." BOTH SOVIET AND US LEADERS HAVE BECOME
USED TO IDEA OF WORKING TOGETHER, AND THIS IS A PLUS. TO
COMPLAINTS ABOUT SOVIET NEGATIVE PROPAGANDA ABOUT US
POLICY RE SOUTH AFRICA, ARBATOV COMMENTED THAT SOVIET
CRITICISM COULD BE SEEN IN PART AS REACTION TO WHAT MOSCOW
REGARDED AS UNDUE US CRITICISM OF SOVIET ROLE IN ANGOLA.
ARBATOV STRESSED SOVIET RESTRAINT IN FACE OF REPEATED
SLIGHTS AND LOW BLOWS FROM US, INCLUDING MOST RECENTLY
SCHLESINGER TRIP TO CHINA AND MIG PILOT IN JAPAN. HE
HOPED NO ONE WOULD ATTEMPT TO USE MAO'S DEATH AS OCCASION
TO HARM US-SOVIET RELATIONS. ARBATOV AND SENIOR USA
INSTITUTE COLLEAGUES WERE BITTERLY HOSTILE IN COMMENTS
ON HEDRICK SMITH'S BOOK "THE RUSSIANS". END SUMMARY.

2. I CALLED ALONE ON ARBATOV SEPT. 9 TO SAY GOODBY.
WE TALKED PRIVATELY FOR A HALF-HOUR, THEN TOURED THE
INSTITUTE'S NEW ANNEX, AND THEREAFTER MET WITH SENIOR
STAFF OF INSTITUTE FOR EXTENSIVE COGNAC/TEA SESSION.
LATTER PERIOD WAS LARGELY DEVOTED TO DISCUSSION OF
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US ELECTION OUTLOOK. ALL STAFFERS, AS WELL AS ARBATOV,

FELT THAT CARTER WOULD WIN IN NOVEMBER, ALTHOUGH MARGIN WOULD BE NARROW. STAFFERS ALSO TOOK OFF AGAINST HEDRICK SMITH'S BOOK "THE RUSSIANS", SAYING IT WAS ONE-SIDED, UNBALANCED AND EVEN DANGEROUS, SINCE IT SHOWED THE USSR AS VULNERABLE AND WEAK, WHICH IS NOT THE CASE. MY REMARKS ABOUT TENDENTIOUS AND ONE-SIDED NATURE OF SOVIET REPORTING ON US WERE BRUSHED ASIDE.

3. ARBATOV WAS FAIRLY MILD AND PHILOSOPHICAL DURING OUR PRIVATE TALK. WHILE THE CURRENT TONE OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS IS NOT PARTICULARLY POSITIVE, HE THOUGHT THINGS WERE NOT AS BAD AS THEY MIGHT BE AND THAT THERE WAS HOPE FOR FURTHER PROGRESS. HE NOTED THAT SOVIET LEADERS HAVE BECOME USED TO THE IDEA OF DETENTE AND OF DEALING WITH THE US ON A VARIETY OF IMPORTANT PROBLEMS. AGREEMENTS FREQUENTLY WERE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE, BUT THE HABIT AT LEAST IS BEING ESTABLISHED. HE FELT THE SAME COULD BE SAID FOR THE US SIDE. ARBATOV THOUGHT THIS WAS A GOOD THING AND HOPED IT COULD CONTINUE. BARRING "UNFORESEEN INCIDENTS," HE THOUGHT IT WOULD.

4. I CHIDED ARBATOV ON THE NEGATIVE, HOSTILE SOVIET PROPAGANDA LINE ABOUT US EFFORTS TO AVOID A BLOODBATH IN SOUTH AFRICA AND FIND A SOLUTION THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS. HE PLAYED DOWN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROPAGANDA, SAYING IT COULD BE SEEN IN LARGE PART AS A REACTION -- A BOOMERANG EFFECT -- TO OUR CRITICISM OF THE SOVIET ROLE IN ANGOLA, WHICH THE SOVIET LEADERS THOUGHT WAS UNWARRANTED. IN GENERAL, ARBATOV FELT THAT THE SOVIETS HAD SHOWN REMARKABLE RESTRAINT IN THE FACE OF A WHOLE SERIES OF SLIGHTS, LOW BLOWS AND EVEN INSULTS FROM THE US IN RECENT MONTHS, INCLUDING MOST RECENTLY THE SCHLESINGER TRIP TO CHINA AND THE MIG PILOT IN JAPAN. ON THE LATTER TWO POINTS, I REMINDED HIM THAT THE US GOVERNMENT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE SCHLESINGER TRIP OR THE PILOT'S DEFECTION.

5. ARBATOV AND HIS COLLEAGUES SEEMED ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE TO SCHLESINGER'S TRIP, COMMENTING REPEATEDLY ABOUT IT IN NEGATIVE AND SUSPICIOUS TERMS. ARBATOV'S FIRST COMMENT ABOUT MAO'S DEATH WAS: "AT LEAST IT WILL SPOIL SCHLESINGER'S CONFIDENTIAL

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TRIP."

6. FURTHER TO MAO'S DEATH, ARBATOV SAID IT WAS OF COURSE DIFFICULT TO PREDICT THE FUTURE IN CHINA. THE SOVIETS WOULD WISH TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, BUT HE DID NOT KNOW IF THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE. THE MAIN THING, HE SAID, WAS THAT NO ONE SHOULD ATTEMPT TO USE THE OCCASION TO WORSEN US-SOVIET RELATIONS.

7. ARBATOV SAID HE HAD JUST FINISHED WRITING AN
ARTICLE FOR "FOREIGN AFFAIRS" WHICH HE HOPED WOULD BE
HELPFUL; HE ALSO INDICATED HE PROBABLY WOULD VISIT THE US
AGAIN THIS YEAR FOLLOWING THE ELECTIONS.
STOESSEL

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